MRS. FISKE STYLES IBSEN THE MODERN PROPHET By Charles Darnton

THERE was no sign of "spring fever" about Mrs. Fiske as she walked briskly across the big empty stage of the Academy of Music after having worked for two hours at that enervating task, a "rehearsal." She never rests, apparently, yet she never seems tired. While other actresses go to pink teas and pinker theatricals, Mrs. Fiske goes to rehearsals. Bernhardt advertises her industry; Mrs. Fiske toils without the tom-tom.

A veil as blue as her eyes was drawn back over the sort of hat Mrs. Fiske always wears, and the gray dust coat that enveloped her might have been associated with an automobile had I not known that Mrs. Fiske is one actress who doesn't associate with automobiles. The coat reminded me of the tour from which she had just returned.

"All tours are very much the same," she said, with just a shade of weariness in her smile. When she returned from California last season she was filled with enthusiasm for the Belascoed "Golden West," and she spoke of San Francisco as "the Paris of America." But this tour had ended in Iowa, and Iowa has no Paris. And yet, from all accounts, the trip had not been without its compensations. She had found audiences for Ibsen, I was told, such as she had never found before. I had learned by experience that Mrs. Fiske, unlike most actresses, will not talk of herself. But the change of attitude toward Ibsen on the part of the public suggested itself as a safe and interesting subject.

"Yes," she said, "there are indications everywhere that Ibsen has at last been accepted. Like Wagner and his music, Ibsen and his plays have had a hard battle to fight, but now that battle seems won. At first there was coldness, bitter opposition, in fact, but now the audiences which go to see Ibsen plays are quite like other audiences, a trifle more intelligent, perhaps. At the same time, I am inclined to think that a great many go out of curiosity. So much has been said of Ibsen that they are curious to know something about him. They may miss his full meaning—he is not to be understood in a day—but at any rate, they go, and that is something. He is recognized as the modern prophet. His is the one great influence on the stage of to-day. Dramatists everywhere are following in his footsteps. He represents modern thought, and where once he was condemned as revolutionary, he is now accepted as only human. He points the way along the road of truth, and, resolute, direct, clear-sighted and fearless, he compels one to think every step of that way."

"You consider him modern in everything he teaches?"

"No, I do not," answered Mrs. Fiske. "'A Doll's House,' for example, I consider hopelessly old-fashioned. I should not care to play Nora again. She belongs essentially to her time and her country. She is impossible in the light of here and now. The American wife and mother of to-day would never dream of gaining her independence by leaving her home and her children. There is no occasion for her doing so. She has her independence and she can neither understand nor sympathize with a woman like Nora. For us, Nora is out of date. The modern woman is too complex to have anything in common with her."

"And Hedda Gabler?"

"A mere creature of her own circumstances, of her own cowardice. She is brilliant, yes, but shallow, treacherous and, worst of all, obvious. For me, a character that is obvious has no interest. There must be something beneath the surface. I must work from within to satisfy myself. Technically, 'Hedda Gabler' is a perfect play. It moves surely, swiftly to its end. But it moves upon the surface. There are no hidden depths in Hedda's nature. She is weak, contemptible, false, provincial. She is one of the smallest of Ibsen's women. The greatest of Ibsen's plays, 'Rosmersholm,' and 'John Gabriel Borkman,' for two, have never been produced in this country."

I refrained from reminding Mrs. Fiske of that ghastly murder of "Rosmersholm" by the Century Players. If she remembered it, she evidently preferred to let the dead past bury its dead.

"Yes," she said, responsively, "I am still planning to produce 'Rosmersholm.' But first I must find a Rosmer. I know of no one in this country who could play the part. I have been told there is an English actor who might make an ideal Rosmer, but I have never seen him. He is Mr. Forbes Robertson. Rosmer has been called 'a modern Hamlet,' dreamer and idealist that he is, and I suppose Rebecca West might be described as a modern Lady Macbeth. We find her in the sleep-walking scene, as it were, and we see her moving like one in a dream to the tragic end of the wonderful soul-drama—in my opinion the greatest of Ibsen's plays. 'Rosmersholm' is modern, psychologic. It is the eternal duel of the sexes, the battle of the old and the new, with both going down to disaster in the end. It is tremendous in its import, and it is constantly revealing new meanings. Its possibilities seem endless."

"You have studied it for years?"

"I have been reading it for five or six years," said Mrs. Fiske, simply, "and I am still unable to grasp all of its many meanings. Rebecca's character is so complex as almost to baffle understanding. She proves best of all, to my mind, that Ibsen is the defender of the modern woman. Not the so-called 'advanced woman,' but the woman of will, the woman of ideas, the woman of brains. It is the psychology of Rebecca that interests me. It is the psychology of a character that always interests me."

"And is it the psychology of Leah that interests you?" I asked, remembering the many profound things that had been said of Mr. McLellan's play.

"I am afraid there is very little psychology in Leah," she said, with a smile of amusement. "That she should be uplifted and transfigured just because a man tells her he loves her is more than I can bring myself to believe. It taxes one's credulity a bit, doesn't it?"

"Is it the criminology of the play, then?" I asked. The term is so beautifully broad!

"No," and this time Mrs. Fiske laughed. "'Leah Kleschna' has been spoken of as 'a study in criminology,' but I have never been able to discover anything of the sort in it myself. For that matter, we are all criminals to a greater or less degree. The criminals who are caught in the act are less ingenious than those of us who manage to cover up our tracks—that is the only difference. They are more naive."

There seemed to be a delightful absence of the missionary spirit in Mrs. Fiske.

"If there is anything better than preventing crime," she went on, "I believe it is the prevention of cruelty. No," and she smiled at her humane hobby, "not alone the prevention of cruelty to animals, but the prevention of cruelty to one another. That is the greatest cruelty of all. No, I don't think 'Leah Kleschna' should be considered a study in criminology. It was never intended to be that. Mr. McLellan was quite frank on that point. His only purpose was to write an interesting play. As for its psychology, I shouldn't even call it psychological melodrama—if there is such a thing as 'psychological melodrama.'"

Poor Leah! So she is just an ordinary, common crook, with a rich "gentleman friend!" But at that, Mrs. Fiske plainly preferred her to the artificial, extravagant heroine of the idealistic brand. I thought of Bernhardt and wondered whether Mrs. Fiske felt that a tent covered a multitude of inartistic sins. Mrs. Campbell, too, came to mind, but when I referred to her coming over next season to join the "independents," Mrs. Fiske merely said:

"How very nice!"

Then it dawned on me that Mrs. Fiske was not addicted to Pinky-Panky-Poos, evening gowns in the afternoon, high-heeled slippers for the street and tanbark a la Fifth avenue.

One must guess at Mrs. Fiske's likes and dislikes. But she did say, as a last word:

"I dislike obvious roles and plays of mere 'situations,' such as Sardou's—in short, the 'trick play.'"

CHARLES DARNTON.

WAS THE MAGISTRATE RIGHT? LETTER CONTEST IS CLOSED

Miss Greeley-Smith Will Announce the Names of the Writers of Prize Letters in The Evening World on Tuesday.

By Nixola Greeley-Smith.

Was the Magistrate right?

The momentous question which has been agitating Evening World readers for the past week is about to be settled.

To-day's letters will wind up the contest, and on Tuesday the prize-winning letters, with the names of their authors, will be announced.

The case of Rosie Collender, who attempted suicide because she had no prospect of Easter clothes, and was afterward discharged by the magistrate before whom she was arraigned, has attracted widespread attention, and hundreds of letters discussing the pros and cons of her case have reached The Evening World office daily.

All the letters have been interesting and so many of them of almost equal merit, that the picking of the prize-winners will be extremely difficult.

Personally, I believe that Rosie Collender or anybody else has a perfect right to shirk a bondage they did not voluntarily assume. And the majority of the contestants seem to hold this view. But the sentiment of a letter in itself will not make it a prize-winner. The prizes will be awarded to what seem to me the best written, most logical letters, regardless of what their individual bias may be.

Her Life Her Own.

Dear Miss Greeley-Smith:

I think the Magistrate was right in discharging the accused girl. All honor and praise to him for his humane act. The girl's life was her own, and it appears a very miserable one. She considered there was nothing more to be gained in this world. Here the wealthy have an abundance and the poor not bread. She was ushered into existence without her knowledge or consent. Only hard work and misery while here, with no expectations for the future. Not the want of fine clothes alone caused her to try the short way out, but a combination of other troubles too sad for her poor, melancholy and sensitive nature to endure.

E. ATKINSON,

Stamford, Conn.

Mothers Approve Magistrate.

Dear Miss Greeley-Smith:

Every mother would have been up in arms if the Magistrate had done otherwise. Parents, be they ever so poor, try to have something new to wear to make their children happy on Easter Sunday. If their income won't allow it they comfort and cheer them in some other way. Rosie did wrong; but she had no one to console and teach her the right way to bear her troubles, so that her act should not be judged as if committed by a person grown to maturity. Could any Magistrate destroy the child's newly-found belief in life? Decidedly No.

Yonkers. Mrs. I. CASELTON.

Precedent Bad, Act Kindly.

Dear Miss Greeley-Smith:

To long for something beyond our ken, our capacity, or our purse, is a very human trait. In the cultured mind this desire may extend to a something infinitely higher than a wardrobe—a desire, perhaps, that causes keener suffering, because of that very culture. As a compensation, however, the mind, in cultivation, has gained in philosophy.

To place yourself in Miss Collender's position, with an untrained, undeveloped intellect, the same temperamental inclinations, and neither the means nor environment to satisfy even a lowly aspiration, would mean an equally low ideal, and the same inability to resist depression. The precedent was bad, but the act kindly.

Rahway, N. J. M. C. H.

About Moral Cowardice.

Dear Miss Greeley-Smith:

The Magistrate only did what any normal-minded man would have done when he discharged Rosie Collender from custody on the charge of attempted suicide. The Magistrate thoroughly understood her case—he took it into consideration that she was both young, fanciful, despondent, a drudge and poor. He was also aware of the fact that her life was but a hard and bitter existence. Law and logic prove to be all right in certain cases—but not in hers. Punishment of that poor, deluded child would have proved unjust, and the Magistrate knew it! The misery and hardships that she has undergone have erased any violation of the law which she committed when she attempted suicide. Her environments have never been such as to educate her up to the point that a suicide is a "moral coward." The young and the uneducated should certainly be dealt with more leniently than those who are of age and those who have been fortunate enough to obtain some education. Drudges in hellish sweatshops and like places certainly do not seem to possess the same high ideals, college education, knowledge of law and logic, which their more fortunate brethren, and can I say sisters, seem to think that they have been inoculated with, and they sit up and howl about "moral cowardice," "sentiment," "too much leniency," &c., and they seem to feel aggrieved and are indignant because the Magistrate did not hold to their opinions and punish this poor, miserable little mouse of a girl.

MISS E. DAY.

Mercy Triumphed.

Dear Miss Greeley-Smith:

To best answer this question place yourself in the Magistrate's position.

A poor unfortunate waif appears before him, a victim of poverty, to whom education is a stranger. Tender in years, she toils in a sweatshop to keep the wolf from the door. She beholds some more fortunate. The desire to appear like them fascinates her. Her childish craving overcomes and leads her to frenzy. The Magistrate realizes the unfortunate circumstances, doubts that visitation of the rigors of law will here subserve the purpose of its enactment. Kind words and acts may save her—a prison term crush her. Mercy triumphs.

BERNARD BOROWSKI.

Old Clothing Debilitates.

Dear Miss Greeley-Smith:

The Magistrate did right in discharging this girl. The lesson will do her more good in strengthening her character and broadening her experience (which always is beneficial) than a term of confinement would. The wearing of old clothing which cannot be improved has a very debilitating effect on any of us and the fact is beyond dispute that nice clothes, cleanly surroundings and an occasional "sunbeam" will metamorphose the most wretched of beings. The home coming from an imprisonment would make her life all the darker, but as it is, the Magistrate's words instilled some rays of light.

CARRIE PUTNAM PRICE.
New Dorp.

Magistrate Showed Christian Spirit.

Dear Miss Greeley-Smith:

In the administration of the law a Magistrate must have reasonable discretionary rights. Whatever his conclusions, whether after long deliberation or of an impromptu rendering, they are the fruit of his judgment. Miss Rosie Collender attempted suicide, being moved by the strongest motives of hope and fortitude than the presence of rope and fortitude than the presence of either vanity or the love of the beautiful. The cause is undoubtedly inherent and deep-seated. The Magistrate in his action exemplified a Christ-like spirit at least and the result of his decision may be productive of much good.

T. H. OTLEY.

Suicide Shows Diseased Mind.

Dear Miss Greeley-Smith:

Deep in the being of every human creature was implanted the love of life; the absence of this love of existence is indicative of an abnormal or diseased condition of the mind. To this poor little waif of humanity the lack of means to provide for herself the pretty finery which every woman craves was a real tragedy. Miserable work, wretchedly paid for, unspeakable monotony, caused a frenzied desire to escape by any means. As well punish an individual who in the delirium of fever jumps from a window and injures himself. With healthful environment and companionship, together with decent wages this young girl, with all life before her, will find the skies blue and the world too glorious to leave.

R. L. GREEN.

GUILBERT WILL HELP MR. PROCTOR CELEBRATE

THERE will be the usual spring slump in theatricals next week, when first-nighters will find their occupation gone. To put it briefly, there will be nothing new.

Richard Mansfield's repertory for his last week at the New Amsterdam Theatre will be: Monday, "The Scarlet Letter;" Tuesday, "A Parisian Romance;" Wednesday, "The Merchant of Venice;" Thursday, "Beau Brummel;" Friday, "Richard III.;" Saturday night the bill will be made up of an act from each of five plays.

Louis Mann and Clara Lipman will return in "Julie Bonbon" for a week's engagement at the Lyric.

F. F. Proctor will celebrate his twenty-fifth anniversary as a manager with a Jubilee programme at the Fifth Avenue Theatre. On Monday the stock company will present "If I Were King," with Henri de Vries in "A Case of Arson" as a special feature. Tuesday, "Mrs. Jack" and Mabel Taliaferro in the garret scene from "The Little Princess." Wednesday, "Mlle. Marni" and "Le Domino Rouge." Thursday the stock company will move up to the Harlem house, while the uptown oragnization, with the addition of James J. Corbett, will come to the Fifth Avenue Theatre for a day in "Mr. Smooth." Vesta Victoria will be the vaudeville feature. Yvette Guilbert will appear again on Friday, when the stock company will be seen in "Candida." On Saturday "The Merchant of Venice" will be played, and Fred Walton, the English pantomimist, will be the vaudeville feature.

May Irwin in "Mrs. Black Is Back" will be at the Harlem Opera-House.

A colored company will be seen in "The New Smart Set" at the Fourteenth Street Theatre.

McIntyre and Heath in "The Ham Tree" will be the attraction at the Grand Opera-House.

"The Curse of Drink" will be the offering at the American.

Theodore Kremer's "Queen of the Convicts" will be at the West End Theatre.

William J. Kelly and his stock company, at the Yorkville Theatre, will give "Jim the Penman."

"What Happened to Jones" will be revived at the Murray Hill Theatre.

The Star will have "The Convict's Daughter."

"Happy Hooligan's Trip Around the World" is announced for the Thalia. There will be a special matinee on Tuesday.

Al W. Martin's "Uncle Tom's Cabin" will be the attraction at the Metropolis.

The Dewey will have Fred Irwin's Big Show.

"The Dainty Duchess" will be the attraction at the Gotham.

"The Social Whirl" opens at the Casino to-night.

Sousa and his band will give a concert at the Hippodrome to-morrow evening.

VAUDEVILLE ATTRACTIONS.

At Hammerstein's Fred Karno's Mumming Birds, presenting "A Night in an English Music Hall," will head the bill. Peter Dailey and his Lulu Girls, the Kaufmann Troupe of bicyclists, Mansfield and Wilbur, the Mysterious Zancigs, A. D. Duncan and the "Great Cableux" will be other features.

At Keith's Delight Barsch and the Broomstick Witches from "The Isle of Spice" will be the headline attraction. Among others will be Felix, Barry and Barry, the Four Musical Avolos, Scott, Wilson and company, Low Hawkins, the Max Nelson Troupe and Daisy Harcourt.

Proctor's Theatres: Margaret Wycherly will be the headliner at the Twenty-third street house. Miss Wycherly will appear in a one-act drama entitled "In Self-Defense," in which she portrays six different characters. Others will be Fred Walton, the pantomimist; the Vassar Girls, Watson's Barnyard, the Crane Brothers, Miss Melville, and Mr. and Mrs. Mark Murphy. Vesta Victoria in new songs will be the headliner at the Fifty-eighth Street Theatre. Other features will be Hagenbeck's Horseback Bears, the Red Raven Cadets, Clarice Vance, and Howard and Bland. At the One Hundred and Twenty-fifth Street Theatre James J. Corbett and the stock company will appear in "Mr. Smooth."

At Tony Pastor's will be Monroe, Mack and Lawrence in "Maggie's Day Off," Cook and Sylvia, Edwin Latell, the Trolley Car Trio, Heyt and Waller, the Fraser Trio and Jules Larvette.

Grace Von Studdiford will head the bill at the Colonial. Josephine Cohan and company, Gus Edwards's School Boys and Girls, Fred Niblo, the Brothers Freydo, and Charles F. Lemon will be other features.

At the Alhambra Thomas J. Ryan and Mary Richfield in "Mag Haggerty's Reception" will be the headliners. Others will be Eddie Clarke and his Winning Widows, Thorne and Carleton, Turner's Animated Song Sheet, the Jackson Family, and J. K. Murray and Clara Lane.

Edna Aug in "The Scrub Woman" will be the chief attraction at Hurtig & Seamon's. Clayton White and Marie Stuart, Henri French, Hoey and Lee, Charles Prelle and Inness and Ryan will be on the bill.

At the Eden Musee a figure of Capt. John F. Walsh, of Engine Company No. 14, who lost his life in the Downing street fire, will be exhibited, and there will be cinematograph pictures showing the life and duties of a fireman.

At the Atlantic Garden Deveno and Schur, Mack Allen, Grace Dean and the Elite Lady Orchestra will be attractions.

The bill at the Third Avenue Theatre will include Fitzgerald and Trainor, James and Bonnie Farley, George Hussey, Metcalfe, Paddock and Edwards, Mr. and Mrs. Gene Hughes in "A Matrimonial Substitute," Renier and Gaudier, and Gracie Emmett and company.

Notes of Music.

MODEST ALTSCHULER and the Russian Symphony Orchestra will close their season with concerts this evening and to-morrow afternoon at Carnegie Hall. Emile Sauret, the French violinist, will be the soloist. Rubinstein's humoresque character sketch, "Don Quixote," and Rimsky-Korsakoff's opera ballet, "Mlada," will be the orchestral numbers.

John Philip Sousa and his band will give a concert at the Hippodrome to-morrow night. The Sousa numbers will include the suite "Three Quotations," the collocation of American hymn tunes, "Songs of Grace and Songs of Glory," and the trumpet march, "Semper Fidelis," used by the United States Marine Corps. The "Robespierre" and "William Tell" overtures will also be played. The band is now on its twenty-eighth semi-annual tour.

Victor Herbert, who had planned an out-of-town tour but has abandoned it to write the music for a Lambs' Club gambol, will take his orchestra to the Harlem Opera-House on Easter Sunday night for a concert, the programme to be announced later. He will resume his Hippodrome concerts on April 22.

Walter Damrosch is to take the New York Symphony Orchestra on a three-week tour, beginning April 18. Among the cities to be visited are Washington, St. Louis and Louisville, Lynchburg and Norfolk, Va.; Raleigh, Wilmington and Asheville, N. C.; Spartanburg, S. C., for five festival concerts; Columbus, Miss.; Birmingham, Ala.; Memphis, Chattanooga and Nashville, Tenn., and Wilkes-Barre, Pa.

Despite the fact that Felix Weingartner, the distinguished German conductor, will not return next season as joint conductor with Walter Damrosch of the New York Symphony Orchestra, the guarantors will still maintain their obligation. The sum is said to be $30,000 a year for three years. Walter Damrosch will conduct all the concerts next season. Weingartner's plea in asking a release from his contract was ill health.

C. Cooke.—Call on Dr. Frank Damrosch, director of the Institute of Musical Art, No. 53 Fifth avenue. Mention your letter to the Editor of The World.

ART CLUB EXHIBITION.

Fifteenth Annual Show of Woman's Work to Be Held.

The Fifteenth Annual Exhibition of the Woman's Art Club of New York will be held in the galleries of the National Arts Club, Nos. 37 and 39 West Thirty-fourth street. The exhibition will open with a reception on Tuesday afternoon, April 17, and close Saturday, April 29. Original works in oil, water-color, pastel, sculpture and the graphic arts by women will be exhibited. Two prizes of $25 each will be awarded, one to the best oil painting and one to the best water color by the members of the club. Through the generosity of the president, Mrs. Ruth Payne Burgess, the $100 prize given by her last year will be again awarded to the best work of art irrespective of medium, open to all exhibitors.

Baby Trips Mother, Fall Kills Her.

WINSTED, Conn., April 7.—The death of Mrs. Emilie Metz, who was buried in Macedonia, in this county, yesterday, was caused by her three-year-old son, who accidentally tripped his mother as she was carrying biscuits to the oven. She fell, receiving mortal internal injuries. She leaves a husband and nine children.